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Mr François de Rugy  
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Assemblée nationale  
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Berlin, 31.08.2018

Dear Mr President de Rugy,

On 18 March 2018, members of the French National Assembly Louis Aliot, Bruno Bilde, Gilbert Collard and Ludovic Pajot took part in the presidential elections in the Russian Federation as international election observers. Furthermore, Jérôme Lambert accompanied the presidential elections in Crimea, occupied by Russia in contravention of international law, and thus gave legitimacy to an electoral process which it does not enjoy under international law.

The five deputies were presented in the Russian media as members of the French Parliament and gave a mostly positive public assessment of the election, in part while voting was still occurring on Election Day. Their findings contradict the conclusions of the international election observation mission of the ODIHR-OSCE and the independent citizen observers' organization Movement "Golos".

The Code of Conduct for International Election Observers states that international election observation missions must be of sufficient size to "determine independently and impartially the character of election processes in a country and must be of sufficient duration to determine the character of all of the critical elements of the election process in the pre-election, election-day and post-election periods."<sup>1</sup> The assessments presented by the above mentioned members of the National Assembly stands in sharp contrast to these rules.

Moreover, by deliberately contradicting the findings of the ODIHR-OSCE long-term election observation mission, Mr Aliot, Mr Bilde, Mr Collard, Mr Pajot and Mr Lambert aimed to misinform the Russian public about the real international perception of the electoral process. This can be seen as an attempt to damage the reputation both of ODIHR/OSCE and the French National Assembly.

The European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) is a civil society initiative of fourteen European election observation organizations with a secretariat in Berlin. Before EPDE was declared an "undesirable organization" by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation on 13 March 2018, the Russian election observation organization "Golos" was a member of EPDE.

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration of principles for international election observation and code of conduct for international election observers, <https://www.ndi.org/DoP>.

The EPDE Secretariat asks you to clarify:

Did the MPs Aliot, Bilde, Collard, Pajot and Lambert inform the French National Assembly about their intention to observe the Presidential Elections in Russia, and what was the response to this from the National Assembly?

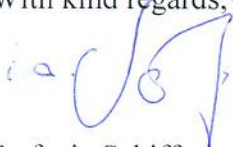
Did the mentioned MPs inform the French National Assembly on who organised and financed their observation mission in Russia?

Does the French National Assembly intend to investigate the behaviour of the mentioned MPs and inquire whether they breached the “Code of Deontology” of the French National Assembly?

EPDE has pointed out the misuse of the instrument of international election observation during a high-level conference organized in March 2017 in the European Parliament, and has developed a series of recommendations that you can find in the attached brochure. Here you will also find details on the international observer missions that the Federation Council and the State Duma of the Russian Federation invited to the presidential elections in March 2018 in the Russian Federation.

We thank you in advance for your commitment to this question and look forward to your response.

With kind regards,



Stefanie Schiffer

Chair EPDE

Annex: EPDE booklet “Politically biased election observation—a threat to the integrity of international institutions”.